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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Office of the Chief  
Information Officer

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TO: Agency Administrators  
Agency Chief Information Officers  
Agency Deputy Administrators for Management  
Agency Information System Security Program Managers

FROM: Charles T. McClam  
Deputy Chief Information Officer  
Office of the Chief Information Officer

SUBJECT: Reporting Personally Identifiable Information Incidents to United States  
Computer Emergency Response Team (US-CERT)

This memorandum serves to remind all employees, contractors, and partners of the importance of reporting personally identifiable information (PII) incidents in accordance with the Department's policy. Per the Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-06-19, dated July 12, 2006 the Department must report all PII incidents to US-CERT within one (1) hour of discovery. The USDA OCIO is responsible for reporting all USDA PII incidents to US-CERT. The USDA OCIO is the only entity authorized to communicate PII incidents to US-CERT.

### What is PII Data?

PII is any information about an individual maintained by the agency which can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity. The National Institute of Standards & Technology's *Special Publication 800-122, Guide to Protecting The Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information*'s provides examples of PII. The following examples are by no means exhaustive.

- (1) "Name, such as full name, maiden name, mother's maiden name, or alias;
- (2) Personal identification number, such as social security number (SSN), passport number, driver's license number, taxpayer identification number, or financial account or credit card number;
- (3) Address information, such as street address or email address;
- (4) Personal characteristics, including photographic image (especially of face or other identifying characteristic), fingerprints, handwriting, or other biometric data (e.g., retina scan, voice signature, facial geometry)."

Recently, a state Supreme Court ruled that the zip code can be considered PII. In this case, an organization used the name of an individual and their zip code to obtain the individual's home address. A Carnegie Mellon study found that more than 80% of the population could be identified using the zip code, date of birth, and gender.

## **Reporting a PII incident to OCIO**

Agency CIOs are responsible for immediately notifying the USDA OCIO of all details associated with a PII incident via the USDA PII hotline. The PII hotline (1-877-PII-2YOU, 1-877-744-2968, or [cyber.incidents@usda.gov](mailto:cyber.incidents@usda.gov)) is operational twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week.

After initial notification of the PII incident to the PII hotline, Agency CIOs shall continually relay information resulting from the discovery process to the USDA Privacy Office and the USDA PII Incident Manager, Mr. Barry Wasser, [Barry.Wasser@ocio.usda.gov](mailto:Barry.Wasser@ocio.usda.gov), or 202-720-7526 until closure of the PII incident.

If you have questions regarding this memorandum , please feel free to contact either Ms. Ray Payton at [Ravoyne.payton@ocio.usda.gov](mailto:Ravoyne.payton@ocio.usda.gov) or Ms. LaWanda Burnette at [lawanda.burnette@stl.usda.gov](mailto:lawanda.burnette@stl.usda.gov).